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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3763  
INFO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0074  
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1567  
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY 1147  
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0016  
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 1341  
RUEHNZ/AMCONSUL AUCKLAND 0361  
RUEHDN/AMCONSUL SYDNEY 0767  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0295  
RHMFISS/HQ USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI  
RHHJJAA/JICPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SUVA 000092

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ROME FOR MFO SINAI - LAROCCO

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [PREL](#) [IO](#) [FJ](#)

SUBJECT: FIJI QUERIES ABOUT IRAQ DEPLOYMENT

REF: A. 06 SUVA 432

[1](#)B. SUVA 67

Classified By: Amb. Dinger. Sec. 1.4 (B,D).

#### Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF) Deputy Commander Teleni on Feb. 6 asked the Ambassador via an intermediary whether the USG would approve deployment of a small number of RFMF officers to the headquarters detachment of MNFI in Iraq. Commodore and interim-Prime Minister Bainimarama had raised an MNFI deployment with the Embassy DATT in late January, seemingly thinking of a platoon or so, but noting implementation could not be near-term, given the security situation in Fiji. We see the RFMF request as aimed at regaining a USG stamp of approval at a time when Australia, New Zealand, the UK, and the USG have otherwise imposed post-coup sanctions. U.S. interests in "democracy promotion" and "peacekeeping" are both at play. Embassy Suva prefers to accent the "democracy" theme by not opening up a new PKO opportunity for the RFMF at this time. Please advise. End summary.

A few RFMF officers to MNFI HQ?

[1](#)2. (C) Jioji Konrote, State Minister for Home Affairs in the Qarase Government, former High Commissioner to Australia, and former Chief of Staff of the RFMF, stopped by the Embassy on Feb. 6. Konrote recalled the Ambassador's meeting with then-Home Affairs Minister Vosanibola last October 17 (ref A) in which Vosanibola, just back from a visit to Baghdad, had said he was preparing a submission to the Cabinet's PKO Sub-Committee recommending a deployment of three RFMF officers to MNFI headquarters in Iraq. (Note: At the four-eyes October meeting, Vosanibola also raised whether MNFI might find a two-star job in Iraq for Bainimarama, to get him out of the Qarase Government's hair.) Konrote said the lead-up to the coup diverted attention to other matters. Now, post-coup, RFMF Deputy Commander Teleni has asked Konrote to revisit with the Embassy the deployment of "a few" RFMF officers to MNFI headquarters.

Bainimarama to DATT: maybe a platoon? Not in near term

[1](#)3. (C) Per ref B, interim CEO of Fiji's Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mataitoga raised the question of an MNFI deployment

with us in general terms two weeks ago. Also, in a phone conversation with the Embassy DATT in late January, interim Prime Minister Bainimarama discussed his continuing interest in an MNFI deployment, seemingly of at least a platoon, though he added that any implementation could not be in the short term. It would have to await the security situation in Fiji calming down. The DATT received the impression Bainimarama was not talking of "onesie and twosie" numbers.

Times have changed; need Washington guidance

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¶4. (C) We gave Konrote the same response we gave Mataitoga: that the situations in both Fiji and Iraq have changed from when Bainimarama first floated the possible deployment just over a year ago, and even from last October. We would seek Washington guidance for a response.

Comment

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¶5. (C) In January 2006, Bainimarama told us after returning from a visit to Baghdad that he was anxious to remove his "boys" from their "static defense" role with UNAMI and put them out on patrol with MNFI. Last October, Vosanibola's vision was clearly more limited: a few officers at MNFI headquarters. Based on Konrote's message today, RFMF Deputy Commander Teleni now foresees the latter, very limited role in the MNFI: a few officers on the headquarters staff. Konrote hinted at the possibility of a more fulsome deployment of troops in the future, though he mentioned twice in the meeting that the interim Government wants to keep RFMF numbers in the Middle East at below 600 total. In that light, with over 320 at MFO Sinai and around 250 at UNAMI, it would seem any RFMF deployment to MNFI would either be small

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in numbers or would have to rob MFO or UNAMI to pay MNFI.

Action request

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¶6. (C) As noted ref B, from the perspective of promoting democratic themes and discouraging Fiji's "coup culture," Embassy Suva would prefer that the USG not open up new PKO opportunities to the RFMF at this time. Bainimarama would surely flaunt an MNFI offer publicly here as evidence of new U.S. engagement with his interim government. That image would run counter to the series of sanctions the USG has otherwise imposed on his illegal government, in step with similar actions by Australia, New Zealand, the UK, and others. In fact, we see the RFMF's motives in re-visiting an Iraq deployment now to be a desire to buttress the interim-government's international legitimacy and to drive a wedge between the U.S. and Australia on sanctions, not Bainimarama's prior motive to get his "boys" some action in the field. To us, Teleni's very limited proposal of a few officers for MNFI HQ confirms that judgment. As noted Ref B, with both "Fiji democracy" and "Iraq PKO" interests at play, Washington will have to judge what response we should provide the RFMF, if any. Please advise.  
DINGER